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TAGS: PREL PREF PGOV KPKO QVIP

SUBJECT: SYG BAN BRIEFS UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 28
KABUL ATTACK

REF: USUN976

Classified By: Ambassador Rosemary DiCarlo for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During a briefing to the UN General Assembly on October 30, Secretary-General Ban addressed the October 28 attack in Kabul which killed five and injured nine UN staff, and discussed the broader implications of the incident on the near-term safety and security of UN staff in Afghanistan. Similar to his briefing to the Security Council the day before, SYG Ban gave an overview of the guesthouse attack, discussed the possibility of future attacks on UN staff, and provided ideas on how to improve the security conditions for UN staff. He detailed the financial support needed from members to support additional security measures for UN staff. Ban noted that during the attack the UN sought assistance from Afghan security forces and "other international support", which took more than an hour to arrive. Following Ban's briefing, a number of members made comments unanimously condemning the attack, providing condolences, and assuring continued support to the UN in Afghanistan. End summary.

¶2. (C) On October 30, Secretary-General Ban briefed the UN General Assembly in connection with the security situation in Afghanistan. Similar to his briefing to the Security Council the day before, SYG Ban addressed members about the October 28 attack in Kabul which killed five and injured nine UN staff. Ban acknowledged that were it not for the brave actions of the UN DSS officials who were armed only with pistols, the attackers armed with suicide vests, automatic weapons and grenades could have done far more damage. (Note: The one UN DSS agent killed was an American citizen. End note.) Ban stated that during the attack the UN repeatedly sought assistance from Afghan security forces and "other international support," which took more than an hour to arrive, and noted that the UN is still "sorting out the facts" in regards to this "delay." (Note: Unlike Ban's briefing to the Security Council on October 29, in the General Assembly briefing he did not mention ISAF directly. End note.)

¶3. (C) Ban confirmed that the UN will not abandon its mission in Afghanistan as a result of the attack; however, he noted that UN staff not on critical election duties are being asked to take accrued annual leave and that consolidation of UN staff residences and work locations is being reviewed with the UN country team. Ban reiterated that he has convened a group of UN agency heads to further discuss possible actions to improve security for UN staff and that these discussions are on-going. (Note: On the margins of this briefing the head of UNDSS told Ambassador DiCarlo that he would travel to Kabul to review security and to make further recommendations for improvements to SYG Ban. End note.) As he had mentioned in the Council briefing the day before, Ban reiterated that President Karzai pledged additional Afghan security support to the UN.

¶4. (U) Ban told member states that it is "up to them to back up the UN staff" with the financial support needed to make them safer in the field. Unlike the Security Council briefing, Ban provided concrete requests to the General Assembly, which included: (1) supplement the UN screening and access project by \$50M, (2) expand spending authority during times of crisis to a level greater than the current \$1M cap, (3) create a \$25M emergency fund, (4) increase UN staff hardship differentials, (5) establish a \$10M family fund to cover the immediate and long-term needs of family members of UN staffers killed or wounded.

¶5. (C) Following Ban's briefing, a number of member states - UAE, Afghanistan, Egypt, Guinea-Bissau, EU, Germany, India, Norway, Turkey, Republic of Korea, Italy, Pakistan and Iran - spoke and unanimously condemned the attack, provided condolences, and assured continued support to UN efforts through the elections and beyond. All welcomed the SYG's request for immediate additional support related to security, although no Members made any firm commitments. The UAE underscored its assistance in evacuating 27 UN staff to Dubai for trauma support following the October 28 guesthouse attack. Egypt asked how the UN can strengthen its coordination with Afghan security forces and ISAF to better protect UN staff. Germany asked if the UN needed protections in Afghanistan similar to that provided by MNF-I in Iraq. Turkey reminded members that in the coming days it will take over ISAF command in Kabul and will increase its troop numbers in Afghanistan. The Republic of Korea announced its decision to increase the number of civilian workers and to open a PRT in Afghanistan.

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